

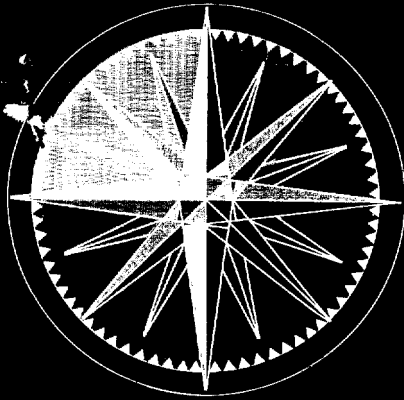
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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SPECIAL REPORT

THE GROUND FORCES OF THE USSR IN TRANSITION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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THE GROUND FORCES OF THE USSR IN TRANSITION

Recent changes in the command, equipment, strength, and doctrine of Soviet ground forces suggest that a more flexible wartime role for them is now contemplated. The ground forces constitute the largest of the five Soviet armed forces branches but were considerably reduced under Khrushchev. Their mission was limited to the relatively minor one of exploiting and consolidating the gains achieved by strategic nuclear missile strikes. However, the ground forces now appear to be undergoing a restoration that will enable them once again to function more effectively as a striking force in a large land war, with or without the use of nuclear weapons. The new attention to the ground troops probably is related to Moscow's view that mutual deterrence has made strategic nuclear war unlikely and, consequently, preparations must also be made for the effective application of power at a lesser level.

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Changes at the Top

Recent changes in the command of the ground troops are intended to make them more readily responsive to modern requirements. There is evidence that the ground forces are no longer headed by a single commander--who at best only exercised overall administrative control--despite Marshal V. Chuykov's claim last summer, in conversation with a US attache, that he had been returned to such a position. Chuykov also noted in the conversation that the ground forces headquarters had been re-established since "some people" had discovered that they could not do away with it. It appears that Chuykov spoke prematurely in the belief that the post of commander in chief would be restored to him. However, his remarks do suggest that ground forces administrative arrangements were in a state of flux at the time. Subsequent evidence indicates that he is not included in the setup that has emerged.

Chuykov's removal--probably in late 1964--was apparently intended to facilitate the streamlining of the Soviet armed forces command structure rather than to downgrade the marshal, who was re-elected to the central committee in April and who remains chief of civil defense. Similarly, it appears that no significant downgrading of the ground forces was intended by the new arrangements. Chuykov's ouster amounted to no more than the elimination of a level of command that was not needed.

For example, Warsaw Pact plans and operations, in which Soviet ground forces play the major role, require no direction other than that of the Pact commander in order to achieve their most efficient use. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] operational command of the ground forces is held by the various regional staffs--presumably military districts and groups of forces--under the General Staff. Since it is probable that Warsaw Pact chief Grechko assumes operational command of ground forces from military districts as well as of the Soviet groups of forces in Eastern Europe for Pact operations, it would be logical for him to be considered Chuykov's replacement in fact if not in name.

Responsibility for the training of the ground forces, formerly exercised by the commander in chief, apparently has been assumed by army General V. Penkovsky under the title of deputy minister of defense for combat training, a post established in 1964. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] in this role, Penkovsky has become involved in more activities than he anticipated, suggesting that more shifts in the ground forces command picture may be forthcoming.

Modern Arms Expand Capabilities

Nuclear and conventional equipment introduced during the past few years has gradually

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modernized the ground forces arsenal. Tactical nuclear/chemical missiles, artillery, air defense, and antitank capabilities have been improved. Still more new ground weapons may be in the planning or early developmental stages. These probably include a missile-firing tank, smaller and more versatile rockets and missiles, and antitank weapons.

The newest, but as yet undisplayed, missile for the ground forces is a 600-mile range ballistic missile named SS-12 by Western intelligence. The SS-12 is probably mobile and may now be deployed. It could serve as an army-front support weapon. A new, wheeled transporter-launcher for the 150-mile Scud tactical missile, displayed in last November's parade, appears capable of carrying a larger missile, perhaps the SS-12. The missile paraded on the transporter was the standard liquid-fuel Scud B.

A new FROG-type rocket, mounted on the chassis of an eight-wheeled vehicle, was also in the November 1965 parade. As with other FROGs it can probably be armed with high-explosive or chemical warheads, or with nuclear ones capable of five- to 20-kiloton yields. It is a completely mobile system with all the necessary servicing, handling, and firing equipment transported on the wheeled carrier. With its range estimated to have been increased to 30 to 35 miles and its greatly improved mobility, the new FROG indicates that large free-flight rockets will continue to be a major ground support weapon.

In the November 1964 parade the Soviets displayed a new multiple rocket launcher mounted on a truck. This weapon, with its 40 tubes and spin-stabilized rockets, is probably more accurate than other Soviet launchers. Traditional artillery also is being improved. The continued interest in tube artillery was indicated by a leading Soviet artillery marshal, who told the US Army attaché last summer that these weapons were still primary support weapons because of their accuracy, rapid reaction time, and responsiveness to the requirements of lower echelon commanders.

In May 1965 the Soviets unveiled their latest antitank missile system--called Sagger--which is designed to improve the ground force's defense against armor. It is an improvement over the earlier Snapper and Swatter antitank missiles in that it can engage targets at shorter range. Moreover, the missiles are smaller and more can be carried on the self-propelled launcher. The only new weapon displayed in the May 1966 parade was a modified antitank RPG-7 grenade launcher which is operated by a single individual. The capabilities of this bazooka-type weapon have not as yet been determined.

Air defense for the ground forces has been enhanced by the introduction of the Ganef surface-to-air missile (SAM) system and by two new 23-mm. antiaircraft weapons. The mobile Ganef system, first shown in 1964, consists of dual missiles launched from a tracked, self-propelled launcher. It is

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probably intended for the defense of a field army. The area defense provided by the Ganef has been complemented by the local protection afforded by the self-propelled ZSU-23-4 with its four automatic radar-directed 23-mm. antiaircraft guns. This weapon, self-contained aboard a full-tracked chassis, appeared in the November 1965 parade. The other new 23-mm. antiaircraft gun was first shown in 1964. This twin-barrel weapon is mounted on a towed, light, two-wheeled chassis. In addition to its air defense role, it can be air dropped and can be used as a direct-fire weapon against personnel and light armor.

The Soviets also continue to improve their armored force. They have developed turreted and overhead-cover models of the wheeled BTR-60 armored personnel carrier. They are delivering the modern T-62 medium tank to units in increasing numbers, and are believed to be developing a new battle tank. A new, heavy pontoon bridge is now being issued to most ground units, and a new amphibian for moving cargo and personnel across small bodies of water is reportedly under development.

In addition, troops of the ground forces have been issued assault rifles and machine guns with interchangeable ammunition and magazines, a step that greatly simplifies small-arms production, training, and logistics.

Ground Forces Increasing Numbers

The Khrushchev policy of maintaining ground forces at a relatively low strength level was adhered to for a while after his re-

moval. However, it now appears that the size of these forces is being increased. The ground forces may now represent close to half of the total strength of the Soviet armed forces. This expansion probably is the result of a combination of developments, including international tension arising from the war in Vietnam, the availability of more manpower because of the new Soviet school system that graduated two classes in 1966, and a change in military doctrine that now appears to recognize the possibility of nonnuclear war and the consequent need for large conventional forces.

Increased manpower will enable the Soviets to bring to full strength some of those divisions that are estimated to be under strength at present. At least 26 of the 141 divisions in the ground forces are believed to be in cadre status. These probably would be filled out before new divisions are established. This expansion would also require a greater share of the military budget for the ground forces.

Shifts in Doctrine

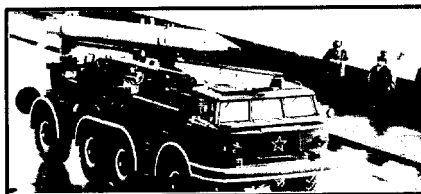
Public and private announcements by prominent Soviet military figures regarding military doctrine suggest that the ground forces are recouping a major role in future warfare. The statements have included references to the increased possibility of large-scale war without the use, or with limited use, of nuclear weapons and the resultant need for large combat-ready conventional forces. The uncertainty surrounding the employment of

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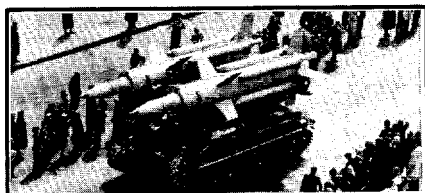
New Soviet Ground Forces Equipment



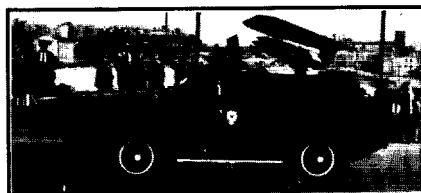
Scud transporter-launcher



Frog-7



Ganef mobile SAM



Sagger antitank missile



Self-propelled antiaircraft gun ZSU-23-4



Twin antiaircraft gun ZU-23



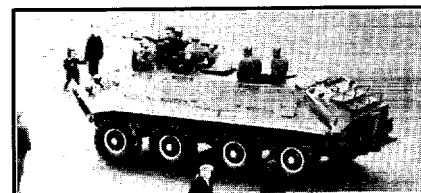
40-round rocket launcher



Bazooka-type weapon



Turreted BTR-60 armored carrier



BTR-60 with overhead cover

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strategic nuclear weapons probably is the cause of the apparent re-evaluation and upgrading of the ground troops' contribution to Soviet defense.

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[redacted] a Soviet colonel also observed that a war could begin without the employment of nuclear weapons. As a result, he said, nations possessing nuclear weapons were trying to maintain ground forces capable not only of nuclear combat but of conventional warfare as well. These forces, he concluded, are able to shift quickly from conventional to nuclear operations.

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On two different occasions during the second half of 1965, Defense Minister Malinovsky publicly expressed skepticism regarding the exclusive reliance on strategic nuclear weapons and suggested that a future war would

not necessarily see their employment. At about the same time, Marshal of Armored Troops Rotmistrov told a US attaché that as deterrence became as binding on the United States as on the USSR, the Soviet Union would continue to maintain its ability to overrun Europe in 60 to 90 days either in a nuclear or nonnuclear situation. This, he said, would keep Europe a hostage to the Soviet Army. Rotmistrov noted that the Soviets would be "idiots" to reduce their ground forces' capabilities and concluded that, to the contrary, the ground forces had been strengthened not only by the addition of missiles, but conventionally as well.

Rotmistrov's comments were in reaction to a public announcement made early in 1965 by Marshal Sokolovsky, who claimed that the Soviet armed forces' strength had been reduced to the 2.4 million level prescribed by Khrushchev. Later in the year, Sokolovsky told a US attaché that Malinovsky's comments on the possibility of nuclear war represented some "refinements" of earlier doctrine. He acknowledged that the nuclear stalemate necessitated a constant upgrading of views on the role of ground forces as well as rocket troops.

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